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Admiral of the World Ocean

By C. L. Sulzberger

PARIS—For the first time, to my knowledge, the Soviet Union now acknowledges that its "fishing" and "scientific" fleets play a military role in its enormous global sea power. Altogether this equals if it does not indeed surpass the overall maritime strength of the United States, only a few years ago considered to have inherited waning Britannia's claims to rule "the waves."

The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies has published in its current military analysis, "Survey," an English translation of key passages from "The Sea Power of the State" by U.S.S.R. Adm. S. G. Gorshkov.

Admiral Gorshkov, by changing the dilapidated Soviet fleet of three decades ago to what may be paramouncy today but is certainly at least par with our own, has earned for himself an unparalleled reputation as a Russian seaman, far exceeding that of Catherine the Great's favorite, John Paul Jones.

He writes: "We are quite justified in treating the sea power of a state as a system which is characterized not only by the interconnection of its

naval, transport, fishing, scientific and other fleets, but by an indivisible unity with its dimension, the World Ocean, for it is in its interactions with the World Ocean that sea power is expressed in its integrity."

When World War II ended, Stalin's only capital ships were the battleship Royal Sovereign, borrowed from Great Britain, and the heavy cruiser Milwaukee, borrowed from the United States. Both were returned and the U.S.S.R. was left with a smattering of old-fashioned submarines, destroyers and coastal defense vessels.

Now, thanks to Stalin's vision and to Admiral Gorshkov's application, things have changed. Indeed, the United States, with a sea-going President whose hero is Adm. Hyman Rickover, and a new seagoing C.I.A. chief, must be particularly concerned.

Admiral Gorshkov elaborates an entirely new basic naval strategy. He writes: "The navies of the leading maritime powers have now been given a new task: to destroy the military-economic potential of the enemy by direct assault on his vital industrial centers by nuclear strikes from the sea."

This is a far cry from the vision of relatively long-range coastal bombardment by heavy guns during World War I, the protection of lines of com-

munication and transportation of both world conflicts, and even the much deeper penetration occasionally achieved by carrier-borne aircraft in World War II.

Moreover, the Soviet admiral unabashedly points out that the U.S.S.R. is now a global power, not confined to the Eurasian land mass, as if we didn't already know this from Moscow's activities in Antarctica, Cuba, Somalia, North Vietnam and Angola. He adds: "The constantly growing maritime might of our country insures our ability to enlarge our colossal natural resources of the World Ocean."

All this is horizontal and geographic. Nevertheless he makes the vertical, historical point that "states without naval power have been unable to maintain the status of a great power for any length of time." This fact was first elaborated by Herodotus anent Athens.

Admiral Gorshkov then adduces a thought not often contemplated by American citizens that "the oceanic vastnesses are now the least secure in the United States system of defense" and "United States territory may become the theater of military operations" in any war.

Admiral Gorshkov contends the Soviets have done away with the tradi-

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tional system of maintaining overseas naval bases and its "most advanced technology and naval construction" now "allows our squadrons to stay over long periods in the most distant areas of the World Ocean and satisfy all their requirements without having to sail to any land bases."

For some years electronic vessels masked as trawlers, supply ships functioning as merchantmen, and repair facilities in nonallied but also non-aligned countries have helped these logistical problems. Strings of mooring buoys also have been dispersed in distant, little-known areas where Soviet ships can rest and be refurbished.

In the end Admiral Gorshkov always returns to his basic theme of a brand new strategy reliant upon the Soviet's submarines and naval air force armed with missiles and nuclear warheads. He predicts: "Forms and methods of naval warfare aimed directly against land targets will play an ever greater part in any future major conflict."

If one looks at his record, the 67-year-old admiral, who would long since have been retired for age in most of the world's navies, has a notable habit of being right.